

Testimony of Alyssa Santos
Proposed Bill SB 284, An Act Increasing the Age From Eight To Eighteen Years
For An Income-Eligible Person To Obtain Medical Assistance
Regardless Of Immigration Status

Esteemed members of the Human Services Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 284, An Act Increasing Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.

My name is Alyssa Santos, and I was born and raised in Connecticut. I am a second-year student at Quinnipiac University School of Law, and am an Advanced Certified Legal Intern in Quinnipiac's Civil Justice Clinic ("Clinic"). In my Clinic work on immigration and family law cases, I have witnessed the barriers lack of immigration status presents for families struggling to provide basic necessities- such as health care- for their children.

As the child of an immigrant father and an American citizen, I have observed the trauma that comes with denying health care to Connecticut residents—both those with citizenship and those without status. My mother, an American citizen and a lifelong Connecticut resident, faced periods of sickness—as a child—where she was without healthcare. My mother's family could not afford non-emergency treatment; as a result, she ended up requiring emergency treatment and incurring substantial unpaid medical bills—bills which could ultimately end up getting passed along to healthcare consumers in Connecticut.

In the Clinic, we regularly come across undocumented children with untreated medical conditions that go untreated and worsen. Had these children been given access to healthcare earlier on, they could have addressed their health issues through non-emergency medical services and developed relationships with healthcare providers- rather than waiting until their condition became so dire that they were forced to go to the emergency room.

Most of the undocumented children that we work with in the Clinic come here through no fault of their own. The decision to come to the U.S. was one made by their parents. Due to the failure to reform the immigration system, these are populations that have been here for decades and will likely stay here for decades: the typical undocumented immigrant in the U.S. had lived here for 15 years or more; more than half Connecticut's undocumented population had lived here for 10 years or longer; and 30% for 15 years or more.¹

For these reasons, we must prioritize the care of undocumented children living in this state. SB 284 would be a tremendous investment into our communities and into our public health system as a whole. This investment would hopefully lessen the burden that emergency rooms face,

¹ <https://plus.lexis.com/api/permalink/19da62c9-b5ac-42d4-bdb9-adabe4908c26/?context=1530671>

allowing them to focus their resources on emergencies if non-emergencies can be addressed outside of the E.R.

I would like to close with a reference to the State of Connecticut's motto, "Qui Transtulit Sustinet", or "He Who Transplanted Still Sustains."² As a state, to this day, we take pride in the variety of experiences, knowledge, and backgrounds that the residents of Connecticut have to offer. These children, regardless of their status, are the future of our great state. At the very least, I believe that they deserve access to healthcare until age eighteen.

I am grateful for the Human Services Committee for raising SB 284, and I strongly believe that this bill will change the lives of children in the State of Connecticut for the better. I hope that my views have resonated with you and they encourage you to expand access to care for children in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like any further information, I can be reached at alyssa.santos@quinnipiac.edu.

² <https://portal.ct.gov/About/State-Symbols/The-State-Motto>